

## Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

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April 20, 2004

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The Honorable Spencer Abraham  
Secretary  
Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue Southwest  
Washington, D.C. 20585-0002

Dear Mr. Secretary,

On April 8, 2004, the U.S. Department of Energy published notice of its intent to prepare an EIS for a rail spur to the proposed Yucca Mountain repository. The Notice indicated that DOE was initiating the scoping process for the EIS and announced a 45-day period for comments, with a deadline of May 24, 2004.

Forty-five days for scoping an EIS that deals with a project that will have substantial and long-lasting impacts not only for Nevada but for states and cities nationwide is entirely inadequate. We are asking, therefore, that you immediately extend the comment period to a full 90 days.

The choice of the Caliente, Nevada rail spur alternative will have wide-reaching implications for shipments of spent nuclear fuel within Nevada and around the country. The decision to construct a rail spur at Caliente will affect the entire high-level waste transportation system, resulting in greater numbers of shipments along certain rail routes and through certain states and cities, and lesser numbers of shipments through other areas. These system-wide differential impacts have never been adequately assessed, and the scoping process for the proposed rail spur must be able to encompass the full range of impacts and impacted areas.

The only way for DOE to adequately identify and assess the full range of impacts that are likely to occur is to provide for an adequate scoping period. Ninety days is the minimum time required to allow the public and affected parties to understand and evaluate the proposed action and prepare comments.

DOE must also be prepared to hold scoping meetings in areas likely to be affected. The three meetings in rural Nevada that were announced in the Notice are insufficient and unacceptable. In addition to meetings in Amargosa Valley, Goldfield, and Caliente, Nevada, DOE must schedule scoping sessions in the state's major population centers, Las Vegas and Reno/Sparks, since the impacts of a nuclear waste rail line cutting across Nevada will be felt statewide.

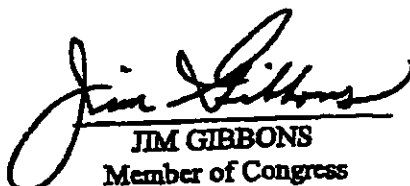
Since states and cities around the country also stand to be substantially affected by DOE's choice of a Nevada rail spur, DOE must likewise schedule scoping meetings in strategic locations nationwide. Such locations should be chosen based on an analysis of how shipments from reactors and generator sites would be routed to a Caliente rail spur. There must be a sufficient number of such meetings to adequately cover key impacted states and cities throughout the Yucca Mountain transportation system.

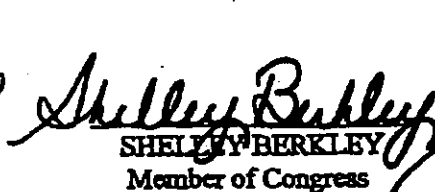
Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

  
HARRY REID  
U.S. Senator

  
JOHN ENSIGN  
U.S. Senator

  
JIM GIBBONS  
Member of Congress

  
SHELLEY BERKLEY  
Member of Congress

  
JON PORTER  
Member of Congress

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